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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the recommendations of a task force appointed by the Alabama State Board of Education in May of 1997 to guide Alabama's two-year college system's development and direction as it re-engineered itself to enhance services to its constituents. These recommendations are to be used by the State Board of Education, in conjunction with the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998, to increase the employment, retention, and earnings of Alabama's workforce. The recommendations are accompanied by a list of "pre-implementation considerations." The recommendations are: (1) the State Board of Education (SBOE) will either transform every postsecondary two-year institution into a community college or close the institution; (2) the community college system will be decentralized into eight regions; (3) the SBOE will establish regional workforce development boards; (4) the SBOE will work with these boards to ensure state and local mandates are met; (5) the SBOE, and not the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, will govern the Alabama Community College System; (6) the SBOE will devise a plan for organizing, delivering, and assessing the quality of literacy training; (7) the SBOE, in consultation with the regional boards, will establish, oversee, and develop a budget for workforce development programs; (8) the SBOE will replace tenure with contracting for new hires; (9) Alabama should strengthen and expand partnerships that support state-of-the-art technical knowledge; and (10) the SBOE will ensure the development of a network of community colleges and other educational institutions throughout the state. (JP)

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WHITE PAPER

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Prepared by
Fred Gainous, Chancellor
The Alabama College System

February 24, 1999

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The Alabama College System

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Alabama's two-year college system, like all others, must from time to time evaluate its role, scope, and mission. In May of 1997, the Alabama State Board of Education appointed a Task Force to develop recommendations to guide the System's development and direction as it re-engineers itself to enhance services to its constituents. The recommendations of the Task Force, the *Workforce Investment Act* and other changes in federal legislation, and the need for a skilled workforce state-wide have all converged to serve as catalysts for change. This phenomenon serves to highlight the unique opportunity the confluence of change and leadership has brought about in Alabama. Never before have so many forces converged upon the two-year college system in Alabama with such magnitude. In many ways they rival or exceed the very forces that created the System. The implications and opportunities for re-engineering are simply staggering.

Yet, as the System embarks on this new journey, it realizes that the perception of its history as one of fragmentation, unnecessary duplication, and political influence is problematic. While much of this criticism about the System's history is more perception than reality it is recognized that change is necessary. For the last decade The Alabama College System, through the leadership of the Alabama State Board of Education, has focused on the elimination of unnecessary duplication through merging and consolidating institutions. It has worked cohesively to enhance access and opportunity and demanded accountability. The political realities of the System will remain as they are until: (1) there are adequate resources available for funding K-12, two-year colleges, and universities; and (2) its governance is no longer threatened. Notwithstanding the history of The Alabama College System, decision and policy makers, upon objective inspection, will find that there is no other system of education in Alabama that can provide for the educational and economic development needs of the state. With 30 public two-year colleges located strategically throughout the state, The Alabama College System should indeed be the premiere and presumptive deliverer of the first two years of undergraduate education, workforce training, and adult education.

Under the leadership of the Alabama State Board of Education, two-year colleges have played an increasingly significant role in workforce development in Alabama. The Board now stands on the threshold of a revolution in workforce development which will make Alabama's two-year colleges the integral component of a unified, coordinated structure preparing the state's workforce for the global competition of the 21st century. The juxtaposition of the Board's Task Force recommendations and the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998* makes the Board the pivotal organization for delivering a comprehensive system of skilled workforce training to meet the future economic development needs of the state.

The Board's Task Force recommendations clearly parallel the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998*. That Act allows the Board to bring together the existing patchwork of fragmented and duplicative workforce training programs into a workforce development system for a new era of global competition. The new system unites postsecondary career technical training, adult education, the JTPA structure, the employment service structure, rehabilitation services, welfare services and other service providers with business and industry. The *Workforce Investment Act* presents the Board with the greatest opportunity of the last fifty years for creating a world-class workforce development system for Alabama. The Board is the only entity capable of coordinating postsecondary career technical training, the contributions of other service providers, and the private sector involvement which has been the impetus for the creation of the Board's Task Force.

The State Board of Education, by coordinating its Task Force recommendations with the *Workforce Investment Act*, will increase the employment, retention, and earnings of Alabama's workforce. It will improve the quality of the state's workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the state.

The cornerstone of the *Workforce Investment Act* is a system of one-stop service delivery centers. Such centers create a single point of entry to job training programs with

access to core employment-related services, including job search assistance and labor market information, skills needed for occupations in demand, wages paid, and employment trends. The location of one-stop centers within the state's system of two-year colleges utilizes existing structures which already provide such services at convenient locations, focused upon adult clients. The *Workforce Investment Act* replaces the *Adult Education Act* and incorporates the *Adult and Family Literacy Act* as a vital link to workforce development. The addition of the adult education function to two-year colleges equipped with one-stop centers will create a natural, seamless transition from literacy to work. No other segment of education or training has the ability to deliver services as does the two-year college system through its dynamic structure and established services to its constituents.

The role of the Board as the state's leader in workforce development positions is to define the role of community colleges in Alabama in the 21st century, and to impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of Alabamians. The two-year college system is uniquely qualified to deliver to Alabama citizens the technical, communication, and cognitive skills necessary to compete with workers around the world. The incumbent workforce must be retrained on a continuous basis to achieve and maintain optimum productivity. All Alabamians must be able to enter the labor force and to compete successfully, and only Alabama's two-year colleges can bring this to fruition.

In implementing recommendations for change, there must always be consideration of the creation of additional bureaucracy with more layers of administration and reporting relationships. As well, there must be consideration of whether the change will provide for the enhanced delivery of services or whether it will result in unnecessary duplication of services.

In the case of the *Workforce Investment Act* and the Task Force Recommendations, there is a rare opportunity to provide improved services to students, to workers, and to

employers, and to reduce administrative inefficiencies and duplication. There is the chance to establish a true, one-stop delivery system using components of an already existing administrative structure and adapting others.

The key to this change is the accountability provided by a single governing board for all components of the delivery of educational and training services: the Alabama State Board of Education. Pre-employment job skills, pre-vocational training to high technology programs, and university transfer programs, are all supervised and regulated by the Board. With a very few administrative and programmatic changes, The Alabama College System will be ready in a relatively short period of time to be the presumptive deliverer of workforce training in the State of Alabama. Accountability mechanisms in the form of Board policies, Chancellor guidelines, and Department of Postsecondary Education enforcement and oversight are already in place to ensure the delivery of quality and responsive training to students and workers and for employers.

The Alabama State Board of Education, the two-year college presidents, and the Chancellor recognize that the recommendations of the Task Force are at the center of the re-invention of the colleges and the future of Alabama. The confluence of the change and the recommendations of the Task Force are fundamental and significant to the development of the future of the System. Yet, it is the inclusive leadership of the Alabama State Board of Education and the colleges that will forge and galvanize the future of the System around education, training, literacy, and economic development.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS
PRE-IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Prepared by
Fred Gainous, Chancellor
The Alabama College System
and The Visioning and Futures Committee

February 24, 1999

RECOMMENDATION 1

The State Board of Education develop and execute a plan whereby every postsecondary two-year institution will become either a comprehensive community college or a branch of such a college, or closed if unable to attain that status.

CONSIDERATIONS

- COC accreditation has long been a goal of the State Board of Education for all two-year colleges.
- Title VI concerns may restrict delivery of expanded academic transfer offerings in Huntsville and Montgomery.
- Some technical colleges may attain separate status as technical community colleges with academic offerings through cooperative arrangements with other institutions or distance delivery.
- State Board of Education should be aware of special circumstances surrounding the HBCU status of some technical colleges.
- Conversion of technical colleges into comprehensive community colleges has wide budgetary implications, stemming from accreditation requirements. EX: academic and science lab facilities, learning resources centers, faculty qualifications, professional development for faculty.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The State Board of Education organize community colleges under eight community college regions. This decentralization is designed to enhance the cost effectiveness, capacity, flexibility, and responsiveness of the system in providing workforce and technical training, academic transfer, prison education, and adult literacy instruction.

> **Eight regions are recommended as the optimal number to promote collaboration among the regional institutions and relate college resources to local communities and employers. The division of 30 institutions among the eight regions will create regional clusters of three to five institutions to collaborate on regional workforce and economic development and share instructional staff and technology.**

CONSIDERATIONS

- There is some disagreement as to the configuration and number of regions. EX: organized under eight regions consistent with existing Board districts; organized under regions consistent with economic development/planning; feasibility of regions cutting across Board districts.
- Recognize advantages of regionalization for cooperation, economic development, etc., and for facilitation for employers of a one-stop approach for economic development.
- Recommend that Board direct Chancellor to develop plan to coordinate with *Workforce Investment Act*.
- Should be paired with Recommendation 3.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The State Board of Education establish regional workforce development boards to provide for regional planning and oversight of community college technical training resources and to create a direct link with local workforce and economic development requirements. Regional boards would report to the State Board of Education. A majority of the members on each regional board should represent large and small employers in the region. A State Board of Education member should serve on each regional board. In recognition of its senior college status and differing purposes, it is also recommended that Athens State University be granted autonomy.

Each regional community college board would have staff to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities. The Chancellor should develop a plan, to be approved by the State board of Education, for the Department of Postsecondary Education to provide staff for both state and regional offices.

A regional board will ensure that program offerings and curricula are tailored to the needs of its region's economy.

Regional boards will recommend to the State Board which institutions should be accredited as comprehensive community colleges, which should become branch campuses, and which, if any, should be closed based on the education, workforce, and economic development needs of a region.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Recommend that Board direct Chancellor to develop plan to coordinate with *Workforce Investment Act*.
- Recognize advantages of regionalization for cooperation, economic development, etc., and for facilitation for employers of a one-stop approach for economic development.
- Should be paired with Recommendation 2.
- Recommend that Board give consideration to becoming Alabama Community College System and take appropriate steps to standardize institutions under that framework; therefore Athens State University should be independent of the Alabama State Board of Education.
- Regional workforce development boards should be Local Workforce Investment Boards in accordance with the *Workforce Investment Act of 1998*.
- Regional workforce development boards should be carefully assessed in the light of SACS accreditation.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The State Board of Education work with regional boards to ensure that workforce training is focused on statewide priorities and at the same time is responsive to local employer needs.

Technical education that leads to high-wage employment will be the major focal point of community college workforce training.

Community colleges are designated as the presumptive deliverer of workforce training. The State Board of Education should establish a system of regional, campus-based one-stop workforce development centers to coordinate the delivery of state workforce development resources. The State Board of Education would contract to locate an employment service office on each community college campus.

The State Board of Education should contract with the Alabama Labor Market Information Service to provide occupational demand data to ensure that curricula and programs constantly relate to state economic development policies and local labor markets.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Community colleges must be designated the presumptive deliverers of workforce training in the State of Alabama since 80 percent of new jobs over the next ten years will require postsecondary education.
- Recommend that Board direct Chancellor to develop the appropriate organizational structure that would support and sustain a comprehensive approach to workforce development training.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Alabama Community College System be governed by the State Board of Education, and dual oversight by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education be removed in order to assure the primacy of the workforce mission and its flexibility as well as to eliminate barriers to accreditation.

CONSIDERATIONS

- State Board of Education must maintain its control as the sole governing board for the two-year colleges in order to continue to meet accreditation requirements.
- Dual oversight of colleges recognized by Task Force is a problem that must be resolved. Currently both the Board and ACHE have sub-committees working to find a solution.

RECOMMENDATION 6

A competent plan for organizing, delivering, and assessing the quality of literacy training be established and executed by the State Board of Education. The emphasis of such training shall be on acquiring the academic skills essential to employment, to skill training for employment, or academic skills needed for higher education. To accomplish this, community colleges should provide adult basic education, literacy instruction, and remediation whether at the workplace, on the college campus, on the university campus for university students, or in a local school or library or community center.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Recommend that Board direct Chancellor to develop plan for literacy training to coordinate with *Workforce Investment Act*.
- In order to emphasize its importance to workforce development, Adult Basic Education has been re-located to the *Workforce Investment Act* from the *Higher Education Act Amendments*.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The State Board of Education, in consultation with regional boards, establish and oversee workforce development programs. Budget formulae should be designed to respond to state and regional workforce and economic development needs and to ensure the college system has state-of-the-art equipment, technology, and faculty development and training. A workforce development budget should be prepared in addition to a budget for academic transfer programs.

The State Board of Education should approve a workforce development budget request each year based on the recommendations of regional workforce development boards.

The workforce budget would cover all technical, occupational, adult basic education, and GED programs offered by community colleges. Institutions will receive workforce development funding that reflects program size and the cost differences involved in delivering each of these four types of programs.

A workforce development incentive fund should be created to encourage completions in fields that are determined by occupational forecasting to be in high demand and produce high-wage jobs. Institutions should earn incentive funds based on training completions, training-related job placement, and job retention in high-demand, high-wage occupational fields. Incentive funds should be used to make investments that permit the delivery of high-quality education and training programs in such fields.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Recommend that Board direct Chancellor to develop plan for workforce development expenditure budget to coordinate with *Workforce Investment Act*.
- Recognize importance of examining budget in light of workforce development requirements under the *Workforce Investment Act*. EX: explore elements of incentive funding

RECOMMENDATION 8

The State Board institute contracting and abolish tenure for all new hires under the workforce budget to establish the flexibility required of the community college system to respond to a dynamic economy. Current employees should keep their tenure.

CONSIDERATIONS

- The State Board of Education does not presently have the authority to implement this recommendation. Implementation will require action by the Alabama Legislature.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Alabama build upon its pioneering effort, the Alabama Technology Network, a collaborative of two research universities, the University of Alabama centers in Huntsville and Tuscaloosa and Auburn University, and seven community colleges. The capacity of the Centers for Excellence should be strengthened and expanded to transfer state-of-the-art technical knowledge from research universities nationally and other laboratories to business and industry throughout the state.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Support the partnership concept engendered through ATN and expand its use through faculty professional development, curriculum development, etc.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The State Board of Education ensure the development and execution of a plan that will connect the community colleges in each community college region to one another and to a statewide network of educational institutions through interactive video and data networks to reduce course duplication and costs while expanding access to high-quality programs. As a part of this plan, a distance learning and faculty network would be established to enable colleges to share courses and faculty and offer specialized instruction across institutions, including technical programs that would otherwise be too expensive for individual colleges to offer due to low student volume.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Support statewide network for linking all two-year colleges with each other and with high schools. This will engender cost savings and curriculum enrichment.